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ABSTRACT

The first of these two articles on women's studies offers suggestions toward a specific course centered upon significant women novelists in twentieth century literature. It is suggested that the subject could be offered as a semester's work on the college or junior college level, and, with a more restricted scope, it could be adaptable to the high school mini-course. Most of the discussion is devoted to a consideration of an approach to the study of the novels of Ellen Glasgow. The second article examines women's studies that have been offered on the college and university level. Against this background, women's studies on the high school level are discussed, particularly the challenges and opportunities they present to the English teacher. (HOD)

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You Still Have a Long Way to Go, Baby: Neglected Women Writers

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IN THEIR EFFORTS TO SECURE SOCIAL JUSTICE for themselves, women have become one of several minority groups in American society who have introduced programs of academic studies centered upon their problems and designed to stimulate ameliorative thought and action. Educators have both a particular responsibility and a particular opportunity to help change the attitudes which have motivated discriminatory practices, since it is their professional obligation to design learning experiences which both provide information for their students and help to develop their powers of thought. Furthermore, courses in women's studies are likely to enjoy a responsive reception among members of the "now" generation, with their noteworthy commitments to social action and the social ideal. And certainly, as tomorrow's body social, they stand to benefit from such courses.

The purpose here is to offer suggestions toward a specific course which might achieve some of the general objectives of programs in women's studies: a course centered upon significant women novelists in twentieth century American literature. In its broadest design, this subject could be offered as a semester's work on the college or junior college level; with a more restricted scope, it should be adaptable to the high school mini-course.

Course Emphasis

Literature courses related to women's studies have tended, so far, to focus on the image of woman and her role in society as revealed or treated in the book itself. Although this will inevitably become a part of the subject for discussion in the course outlined here, it is subordinate to the major intent, which is to emphasize the substantial achievements of the real women who wrote the books rather than the portrayal of the fictional ones within the books. A novelist like Edith Wharton or Ellen Glasgow should, of course, be studied because she is a good author, not because she is a woman, just as Faulkner and Hemingway are studied for their contributions to American literature rather than because of their sex. To date, however, such has rarely been the case.

Recently, for example, a manuscript concerning a twentieth

century woman novelist, a Pulitzer Prize winner, was rejected for publication on the basis that the author was not related to other women authors of her period. It is unlikely that a study of Hemingway would have been rejected because it did not relate him to the other male writers of his period. Discrimination against women writers if further evident in the fact that they are frequently under-represented in the anthologies designed for the study of American literature. One new anthology (1970-71) edited by a reputable shcolar includes, in the volume covering the literature from the turn of the century to the present, thirty-one fiction writers, of whom nine are women, and thirty-six poets, of whom five are women. Given a population in which women outnumber men and a time period during which coeducation has become general, it seems debatable that only about twenty per cent of the significant creative writing has been done by women. Again, in an anthology of "new American poetry," published this year, of the nineteen poets represented, three are women—surely another unrealistic representation of the proportion of significant contemporary poetry being produced by women. On the academic scene, the same discrimination is evident when an entire course can be devoted to the study of a single male novelist such as John Barth whereas no course is devoted to the study of any woman of the first stature, much less one comparable only to Barth.

Genre Vs. Writer

The point at issue, of course, is to stimulate recognition of the fact that a number of individual women have made significant and individual contribution to American letters. A literature course designed with this motive in mind and intended for a semester's work on the college level could easily and rather obviously deal with the works of women who have succeeded in any of the literary forms: short story writers like Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor, poets like Marianne Moore and Sylvia Plath, dramatists like Lillian Hellman, or novelists like Willa Cather, Edith Wharton, and Katherine Anne Porter. Where greater limitation of scope is in order, however, concentration on the novel would afford an opportunity to study the type of belles-lettres in which women have made, perhaps, their most noteworthy performance, as well as draw upon the appeal and interest intrinsic in the novel as an art form. Another obvious means of adapting the objectives of these proposals to a restricted time-limitation like that of the mini-course is to concentrate on one author.

Of the possibilities available, the remainder of this discussion will be devoted to a consideration of an approach to the study of the novels of Ellen Glasgow. This choice is motivated by several purposes.

A study of Ellen Glasgow's fiction might help to effect for the author herself some of the justice which the course is designed to reveal the need for. Although the lady from Richmond enjoyed widespread popularity and received substantial critical acclaim in the course of her career, she has always been generally misinterpreted and is now largely neglected. Although some women authors of her generation, like Wharton and Cather, have been recognized and frequently anthologized, only one widely used anthology of American literature now included any of her work, a single short story. Furthermore, like other good women writers who have been neglected, even when she is studied, she is viewed not so much as an individual writer as she is a genre writer – in her case, as a regionalist or local-color writer, to be grouped with others who have depicted modes of life in particular regions of the country, as Sarah Orne Jewett did for New England life or Kate Chopin did for life in old New Orleans. But Ellen Glasgow is more than a "regionalist" and she is more than a "Southern writer," as the labels frequently go.

Her work involves greater merit and should receive individual attention, as careful analysis of at least the most significant of Miss Glasgow's twenty novels will reveal. Certainly it is demostrable that what she has to say is of greater substance than the work of some male writers presently receiving republication and new critical analysis, such as George Washington Cable. The most important reason for concentrating on the novels of Ellen Glasgow, however, is that they have particular relevance to current social issues. Consequently her ideas need and deserve re-evaluation by the rising generation, who are likely to find in her a spirit congenial to their own. Ellen Glasgow was a social rebel, dedicated to that concept of freedom for the individual which so engrosses today's young people and which, coupled with concern for the general welfare, is historically the objective of this nation.

Student Reactions

A small experiment conducted recently in an Honors section in English at the University of Maryland suggests that Glasgow's late novels would receive warm if not enthusiastic response from students. Two student volunteers were exempted from a regular class assignment in order to read *In This Our Life*, the last novel Miss Glasgow published in her lifetime and a book not widely read today, although in her day it was popular enough to be filmed. Each reader was to write an essay exploring his or her honest response to and opinions about the novel. The setting of the is Richmond in World War II; the subject is the search for personal freedom within the closer human relations – in this case, marriage

and the family. Both the young man and the young woman who served as volunteer readers responded with more than ordinary interest to the personal conflicts in which the Glasgow characters are engaged, as well as the moral and ethical implications that derived from their situations. The readers complained, actually, of the difficulty of restricting the scope of their discussion, since the book invites thorough evaluation of both "the great tradition" and "the new morality," to use the author's terms. The success of this little trial suggests that a number of Glasgow's novels of social commentary might have the same success, including those devoted to comic treatment of the same problems, such as *The Romantic Comedians*.

Glasgow's Real Subject

A course featuring novels by Ellen Glasgow could well begin with the reading and discussion of *In This Our Life*, one of the author's most forceful dramatizations of the complexities inherent in modern American social relations. This might be followed by giving some attention to the author herself: a quick survey of the artist's career, with some generalizations about the canon it produced.

An introduction to the author should rectify some of the misconceptions from which her work has suffered. For example, Miss Glasgow was not the local-color writer she has generally been considered to be; neither was she the social historian she intermittently claimed to be. The latter point was a suggestion made to her and not an inherent outgrowth of the fiction itself. Indeed, she later disclaimed such an intent. She herself insisted repeatedly upon the universals in her work, and she was right to do so. Her "Virginia" is, quite frankly, depicted inaccurately, geographically and otherwise. Her real subject is woman's life—in the later novels, more particularly, woman's life in modern America. She early discovered the inadequacies of that life and began, at the turn of the century, what she called her "search for truth," by which she meant a search for some understanding of the whys and wherefores of human life, in the hope that from such knowledge she could evolve a "code for living," one which would insure personal freedom for the individual and especially for the individual woman. Her twenty novels are her record of the results of that life-long search. Her methods were the usual ones involved in such an experiment. First she studied philosophy, including Eastern mysticism. In the end she found golf "more therapeutic." The world-view she felt herself ready for, when she came upon it in her program of self-education, was Darwinian naturalism. But Ellen Glasgow's final conclusions were derived essentially from

that element which is conveyed most strongly in her novels: her own personal observations of and experiences with life in twentieth-century America.

Living as she did in an area devoted to a hallowed social tradition, she was in a position to analyze and evaluate that tradition. And, living as she did through the period between the World Wars, she was in a position to analyze and evaluate the new morality which evolved from the disenchantments of that period. According to her, the weaknesses of the "great tradition" involved the delusion of superiority characterizing certain strata of society, and the escape from reality which she designated as "evasive idealism." Its strengths included the effort to develop character and the appreciation of a beautiful life-style. The weaknesses of the "new morality" were egocentricity and evasion of responsibility, while its strengths were the intent to be honest and a commitment to freedom. From her studies of the reasons for the failures in both the old and the new codes, which lay in the age-old conflict between biology and civilization. Ellen Glasgow, in short, is a prime example of what one might call the twentieth-century experience; her career as a thinker demonstrates the naturalist in the making. Yet, like most self-declared adherents to that position, she ultimately did not find pure naturalism cogent, in that it failed to gratify spiritual hunger. And from such facts concerning the human condition she finally developed the three tenets which constituted her code for living. The archetypal situation she used in all her books within which to explore the complexities of human relations was the marriage relationship. Maintained according to the dicta of the great tradition, she found this relationship too limited in numerous regards for both men and women. On the other hand, to her the attitudes of the new morality regarding marriage failed to take into account pertinent factors in human nature.

Sociological Approach

Today's students, with their rather sophisticated knowledge of psychological theory, will almost certainly perceive that the Glasgow novels reveal more than the author may consciously have intended, but they will almost certainly find in her clear-eyed view of the limitations of traditional mores a disenchanted, though not altogether hopeless, view congenial to their own. After some introduction to the novelist's career, a reading of a selection of her later novels, in both the serious and the comic modes, should reveal observations and conclusions relevant to their own social interests. The obligation of the student is, at that point, to evaluate the ideas the author has dramatized, noting fallibility as well as viability and, in the case of the more innovative ideas, considering

the probable consequences of their implementation in society. Of the novels selected for this purpose, the most significant would include the recently published sequel to *In This Our Life* called *Beyond Defeat*, and the somewhat earlier novel, *Vein of Iron*. Although they are less readily available, not having appeared in paperback, at least two others of the novels deserve consideration in his regard. *The Sheltered Life* offers a serious and penetrating psychological analysis of the inhibitive impact of the great tradition on both the conduct of adult life and the development of the adolescent, while *The Romantic Comedians* treats the same basic situation with sad laughter.

Not all of Ellen Glasgow's concepts will appeal to all readers. Furthermore, her work is not without its aesthetic flaws, which tend, incidentally, to be similar to those in the work of her literary hero, Thomas Hardy. But like Hardy, at her best she is very good indeed, and even when she is irritating she is, perforce, stimulating. She writes with power and verve about many problems inherent in the search for the social ideal, and both her writing and her experience as a professional woman of letters illustrate vividly one aspect of that search: the role of woman in modern American society. For further insight, a college-level course should probably include the autobiography, as well as selections from her considerable body of literary commentary. It could profitably include study of her earlier novels, in which she was groping for the convictions that she presents more forcefuliy in the later ones. The very process of searching for truth has, of course, its own interest, as does the depicition of woman's life in earlier decades of the century. And in the light of the attitudes and practices that women continue to experience, the early books reveal that, in many regards, you may only *seem* to have come a long way, baby.

Studied alone or in conjunction with the work of other writers, Ellen Glasgow's fiction has interest and merits attention. Above all it is, in the fashionable sense of the work, "relevant."

Manuscripts for future issues are welcomed and may be submitted to any member of the Editorial Board on the title page. The address of the Editor is:

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Women's Studies and the High School English Curriculum

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Within the past year or so, Women's Studies, a new and highly significant development in American education, has moved into the secondary schools. Courses, and units within courses, are being offered in high schools across the country. What, then, is Women's Studies, and what new possibilities does it offer to the high school English teacher?

Women's Studies began on the college and university level about 1968—at the time of the rise, within professional organizations, of commissions investigating the status of academic women. That status, as surveys conducted by the American Historical Association, the Modern Language Association of America and others demonstrated, was low, with women massed at the bottom of a pyramid representing the academic hierarchy in this country. Women were found to be crowded into the lower ranks of the profession and into the less prestigious institutions. They were paid less than men even when their qualifications and experience were the same. They were promoted less rapidly and granted tenure more slowly. Especially ironic was the situation in English and the modern languages, since in those fields women constitute 55% of the entering graduate students, yet only 8% of the full professors teaching in the top graduate schools in the country. The teaching of English has always been a woman's profession, yet where were the role models, in the way of successful women teachers and scholars, who could inspire female graduate students to believe that they, too, could succeed?

Male-dominated Curriculum

Such surveys reinforced a larger awareness — that the second-class status of professional women in higher education was merely one manifestation of the second-class citizenship accorded women in our society, and that the American educational system, on all levels from elementary school through graduate school, was one of the great offenders in perpetuating this second-class citizenship.

As academic women, therefore, began to scrutinize American higher education, what they found was a male-dominated cur-

riculum: textbooks used in standard American history survey courses that devoted 1% coverage to women; textbooks used in standard freshman composition and literature courses that contained at most a 7 to 8% representation of women writers; composition textbooks that revealed sexist bias in their choice of examples, such as Yvonne the dumb blonde who must be taught by her boy friend and her male instructor how to think logically, or a discussion of the use of analogy which included the example, "Marrying a divorced woman is like buying a used car."

Women's Studies Offered

Examination of the curriculum to which college English majors are exposed beyond their freshman and sophomore years further revealed the extent of male dominance. The English major reads a long list of required male writers – the canonized greats of English and American literature – many of whom did not especially like women, or did not see women as men's equals. One oversimplifies in selecting examples: that Eve is primarily responsible for the fall from Paradise in *Paradise Lost* or that Dr. Johnson compared the sight of a woman preaching to that of a dancing dog; that Hawthorne refused to let his own daughter become a writer, or that Hemingway wrote a book called *Men Without Women*–a state of affairs he presumably preferred. But exposure to such authors as "givens," without careful critical attention to their treatment of women, has often reinforced in the average English major the notion that women are to be either ignored or condemned. In survey courses, especially in American literature, the student is likely to be exposed, given the anthology selections available, to a host of minor male writers to the exclusion of many women writers who are their equals if not their superiors as literary artists. The message certainly comes through–that women are not to be taken seriously as creators, inventors, independent thinkers, people with their own identity.

In an effort to right the imbalance, Women's Studies courses began to be offered, and the number has grown by now from approximately 100 in 1968-69 to well over 1800, with new courses being introduced. The aims of such courses, which can be either interdisciplinary or taught within traditional departments, are, usually, to demonstrate the existence and the nature of sexist bias in our society, to analyze the stereotypes that have defined and confined women within particular, limited, and often self-defeating roles, and to explain the processes of socialization through which such stereotypes and roles are perpetuated. Courses offered are primarily in the humanities and the social sciences, with 25% to 30% being offered in traditional English departments.

In literature, specifically, there are by now at least three kinds of courses, although aims, content and approaches naturally often overlap.

1. Courses on the image of woman in literature, which try to explore the attitudes of authors, especially male authors, towards the women characters they create, the assumptions about the female role on which they operate, the stereotypes that may have influenced their creation. Such courses may compare the image of woman presented in the literature with the actual lives of women at the time the literature was written: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Zenobia in *The Blithedale Romance*, for example, with the real woman on whom her portrait was partially based, Margaret Fuller; or Henry James's women reformers in *The Bostonians*, whom he depicts as odd, grotesque, abnormal , with the real women reformers in the post-Civil War decades in the United States.

2. Courses devoted specifically to women writers, examining their contributions to literature, the nature of their creativity, and the conditions that helped or hindered that creativity. One aim of such courses is compensatory—to make students aware of all the lost women writers whom we must rediscover. In American literature, for example, we have recently rediscovered such authors as Rebecca Harding Davis, Kate Chopin, Tillie Olsen, Christina Stead, Agnes Smedley, Harriet Arnow, and others. Another aim is reevaluatory. When such courses deal, as they do, with already well-known or classic women writers such as Virginia Woolf, the Brontes or George Eliot, critical reevaluations and feminist perspective are needed, since such authors must often be read differently from the way male critics have read them. (In this regard one must recognize the extent to which our interpretations of literature are male interpretations, since most literary critics are and have been men. Thus, a recent collection of pamphlets on American women writers received from the University of Minnesota Press revealed that out of a dozen or so only two were written by women critics.) Finally, a third aim of such courses is to try to show students that women do have a literary heritage to be proud of ond one on which they can continue to build.

3. A third kind of course has recently emerged, which takes the implications of the previous two kinds a step further. These are courses that focus on exploring the nature of female experience as it is presented by women writers, with the intention of helping students to bring their own experiences to bear in exploring and understanding the literature they read. Such courses are often structured informally, with students and instructor seen together as

a "community of students" or of readers who use the text, in the words of one student in such a course, as an arena for their own lives: "The poem is an arena into which we enter to change ourselves and each other." Such courses emphasize open, nonauthoritarian discussion of, for example, particular poems by women dealing with such experiences as sex, love, marriage, childbirth. If the poems elicit different readings and different reactions from the participants, depending on their different life experiences, all such different reactions are explored and discussed. Such courses tend to emphasize more than the preceding kinds the possibilities for self-discovery and for personal change and growth. It should be obvious that men have as much to learn from such courses as women.

Against this background one can discuss the growing interest in Women's Studies courses on the high school level, and the particular challenges and opportunities they present to the English teacher.

Two Major Problems

To begin with, I believe that all the patterns worked out so far on the college and university level are available for adaptation by the secondary schools: courses, or units within courses, on women writers or on the image of woman in literature; the incorporation of more women writers within traditional survey courses; the examination of the treatment by authors of their female characters and of the treatment of women writers by male critics; the examination of textbooks for sexist bias in their coverage of women, attitudes towards women, uses of language, choice of examples.[1]

Meanwhile, two major problems confront teachers, supervisors and curriculum planners who wish to introduce Women's Studies into the literature curriculum. One is knowing what questions to ask as one newly explores literature from a feminist point of view, and the other is that of finding materials to use. The second problem is more readily solved. Materials are available, and will become increasingly available. A major source of materials at present (and what will undoubtedly continue to be a major source), is The Feminist Press, established by former Goucher College professor Florence Howe, and now located at the College at Old Westbury in New York. Available from the Press in May was a pamphlet of 16 pages, *Feminist Resources for Schools and Colleges: A Guide to Curriculum Materials*.[2] This pamphlet will be a basic resource list for people planning work in Women's Studies on the secondary school level. It will include annotated lists of sexist and non-sexist books, of films and slide shows, and reports of work in curriculum reform now under way in entire state school

systems such as those of Michigan and Minnesota. Information about a Resource Center to be established in Washington, D.C., also included in the pamphlet, should be of especial interest to Maryland teachers. By the end of June the Press will also have available a monograph, *High School Feminist Studies*, which will offer syllabi, reading lists, bibliography and course descriptions and which will include the earlier *Feminist Resources* pamphlet. Modelled on earlier collections of college-level Women's Studies courses compiled and published by the Commission on the Status of Women of the Modern Language Association, this monograph should give teachers and curriculum planners a wealth of materials to draw upon. The editor of the monograph, Carol Ahlum, has been in correspondence with some three hundred high school teachers across the country.

Another Feminist Press publication of value to secondary school educators is the *Women's Studies Newsletter*, published quarterly, of which two issues have appeared and a third is forthcoming. Monitoring developments in Women's Studies on all educational levels-elementary, secondary and college—the *Newsletter* contained in its first issue an article that presented an overview of high school feminist studies, and in its second two articles, one describing a one-semester Women's Studies high school literature course, the other a one-semester Women's Studies high school history course. The third issue will include an article describing a year-long Women's Studies high school course.

Paperback Short Works

Meanwhile The Feminist Press is also an excellent source of other materials that might be used in the secondary schools. It is publishing a women's biography series, of which three have appeared so far, on Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Constance de Markievicz. These are written to be read by high school students and are inexpensively priced. The Press has also begun a reprint series, to make available works by women writers that have been neglected or that have dropped out of sight. The first published reprint is "Life in the Iron Mills" by Rebecca Harding Davis, with a long biographical introduction by Tillie Olsen. Others in the series to be published soon are a short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper," a harrowing story of the confined life of a middle-class nineteenth century woman by the American feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and a novel, *Daughter of Earth*, by Agnes Smedley, a story of the childhood and growth to womanhood of a girl from a working class family.

Of course, the existence of inexpensive paperback reprints by commercial publishers makes it possible for teachers to include in their literature courses such works as Olive Schreiner's *The Story*

of an African Farm, or Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, or Tillie Olsen's short stories in *Tell Me a Riddle*. There are many works by contemporary black women, such as Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, or Anne Moody's *Growing Up in Mississippi*, or *The Black Woman*, an anthology of essays, fiction and poetry edited by Toni Cade. Still other possible paperbacks include *Growing Up Female in America*, a series of nineteenth century autobiographies, letters and memoirs, excerpted and edited by Eve Merriam. Contemporary women poets such as Diane Wakoski, Denise Levertov and Adrienne Rich, who explore in their poems what it means to be a woman, with an openness hitherto unavailable to women writers, provide further exciting reading, especially for senior high school students. And this is, of course, just a quick, random sampling.

Recommended Anthologies

Another rich source of materials is anthologies, an increasing number of which are becoming available in paperback. One kind of anthology is that edited by Mary Anne Ferguson, *Images of Women in Literature*, which defines and explores the stereotyped roles into which women have been cast: the submissive wife, the mother, the dominating wife, the sex object, the old maid. Short stories plus a few poems and a playlet are grouped under each of these categories, and the student is encouraged to recognize, explore and question the validity of the stereotypes.

Another kind of anthology is that edited by Michele Murray, *A House of Good Proportions Images of Women in Literature*. Here the literary materials (primarily short stories, with some sections from novels and some poems) are organized not according to stereotypes but under section headings describing "various stages in a woman's life"—the young girl, the virgin, women in love, independent women, the wife, the mother, etc. The readings are sophisticated, but should be accessible to senior high school students or to students in advanced sections of literature. Similarly organized but including only women writers is another recent anthology, edited by Beth Kline Schneiderman, *By and About Women*, which contains short stories by such well-known writers as Dorothy Parker, Gwendolyn Brooks, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Katherine Ann Porter and Shirley Jackson. The anthology is organized in four units, on adolescence, marriage, alternatives to marriage, and old age and death. All of these anthologies contain bibliographies that offer the student opportunities for further reading. More such anthologies will undoubtedly become available, geared to various high school levels, as publishers respond to what will inevitably be a growing demand for them.

Publishers are already responding to the interest in Women's Studies, and teachers and curriculum planners should write to publishers, suggesting new books of readings, and also indicating their dissatisfaction with existing textbooks. Scott, Foresman and Company, for example, has recently issued a pamphlet, *Improving the Image of Women in Textbooks*, with specific examples of how the achievements and actions of women can be recognized, how stereotyping can be avoided, how the demeaning of women and the sexist use of language can be corrected. Editors of series of books can also be alerted to possible discrimination. Fleet Press has a book, *Heroines of America*, described as a young reader widely used in the intermediate and high school grades throughout the country. The publishers are justly proud that the book contains biographies of women, such as Margaret Sanger and Georgia O'Keefe, not ordinarily found in such a subject area. One also learns, however, that the book is part of a series on Heroes—heroes of Mexico, Puerto Rico, Israel, and heroes in music, medicine, archaeology, journalism, art, etc. The publishers are presumably not aware that the attention they are giving to women amounts to tokenism.

Worth mentioning also is the series of resolutions on women's rights, including several dealing with sexism and teaching materials, recently adopted by the American Federation of Teachers. The resolutions protest the use of stereotypes, especially the relegation of females to passive, non-decision making roles, and of sexist uses of language, such as the use of "he" and "man" to describe all human beings; they argue that more course content should focus on women and that stereotypes of the family be altered to provide for the portrayal of a variety of life styles; and they instruct the Federation's Women's Rights Committee to rate teaching materials in terms of sexism, with protests to publishers to follow where these are called for. It is to be hoped that other unions will pursue similar courses of action.

Asking the Right Questions

To turn now to the other problem confronting teachers—what questions to ask as we reexamine the treatment of women in literature and teach literature by women. This is more complex, and I think we must all keep educating ourselves to find the right questions to ask. But one learns what to look for as one reads. Should one teach *The Scarlet Letter*, for example, simply as allegory or as a piece of fiction dealing with the problem of sin, or should one ask what it meant to be a woman in seventeenth century New England? Can one ask students what is Hawthorne's attitude towards Hester Prynne: does he admire her, does he punish her

too severely, does he make her suffer more than the man for their joint transgression, is he ambivalent towards her and if so, why? Or, in dealing with Emily Dickinson do we still present her as an odd, eccentric spinster, dressed in white, who lost her lovers and hid behind the white curtains in her father's house, to the detriment of the Emily Dickinson who comes through in her poems—a strong individual, defiant of many of the social and religious conventions of her time, interested in questions of a woman's status and power, or relative powerlessness, who chose a life of isolated independence as a way of preserving her own identity.

Can we discuss with students the tremendous obstacles so often faced by women who wanted to be writers—the need, for example, of George Eliot and the Brontes to publish their novels under male (or ambiguous) pseudonyms in order to avoid the jeers of male reviewers who would not take writing by women seriously, reviewers who found Eliot's work "powerful" when they thought it was written by a man but full of "feminine delicacy and tact" with "here and there a disturbing unladylike coarseness" when they discovered it was written by a woman. Can we read the male critics of these women writers and get beneath their often misleading assumptions? In the case of Emily Dickinson, again, students have presumably accepted the judgment of George Whicher in his scholarly critical biography of her, that she was fortunate to have been born in the town of Amherst, Massachusetts, with its college and intellectual milieu fostering creative activity. Recently, a feminist critic rightly suggested that since Emily Dickinson as a female was never allowed to attend prestigious Amherst College her frustration may have outweighed any of the so-called advantages Whicher described.

Meanwhile there are many general issues and questions to which we can be alert. We can define and locate stereotypes and pursue the implications of their presence. We can keep in mind such questions as, are women characters presented in their own right, or primarily only in relation to men; are they admired, or feared (and punished) for swerving from conventional roles; do women writers themselves, as one critic suggested, sometimes "play themselves and their characters false in an effort to respond to male expectations"? Eminently useful in discovering new questions to ask, new approaches, are the essays in two issues of *College English* devoted to teaching and writing about women in literature. The questions the essays pose, the new perspectives they present and develop, are as relevant for literature read in the high schools as for that read in college. Also, several volumes of *Female Studies*, published under the auspices of the MLA Commission of Women, contain, in addition to college course descriptions, essays that ex-

plore classroom procedures in teaching Women's Studies courses in literature, and essays of literary criticism that raise and grapple with some of the new questions confronting us.

The anthologies mentioned earlier raise some questions of their own. One may not be entirely happy to see woman's life blocked out into virginity, love, marriage or alternatives to marriage, wifehood, motherhood. In a way this is to perpetuate old stereotypes, confine women again in categories. And if such anthologies suggest either through their structure or their contents that a woman's life is likely to be largely or wholly one of compromise, disillusion and defeat, or if the situation of women is seen by the editor as not significantly different from that of men (that, for example, it is simply "the human condition" to encounter disillusion or defeat), then the literary materials which such anthologies provide must be presented to students in such a way that the editor's choices, judgments, interpretations and organization not be taken as absolutes. Teachers can discuss the assumptions that lie behind the anthology's organization, and offer the editor's comments for classroom discussion and debate. Uncritically to present literature, whether by men or women, that stresses compromise, adjustment, the inevitability of disillusionment for women may be simply to reinforce women students in their traditionally passive roles.

New Program in Women's Studies

There isn't space here to discuss in detail the work that might be done in composition courses, but students should of course be encouraged to write openly and honestly about themselves and their experiences and to relate those experiences to the literature they read. The classroom atmosphere should stimulate questioning and open discussion of materials written and read. Women students, especially, so often have low opinions of themselves, having, in the manner of any oppressed group, internalized their oppression, that they need the encouragement of knowing that their writing about themselves will be taken seriously.

At Towson State College, where I teach, we are currently designing a program in Women Studies. By next year we shall be offering Women's Studies courses in the departments of English, history, philosophy, modern languages, sociology, physical education and art, as well as one or more interdisciplinary courses. It will be possible for students to elect Women's Studies as a major concentration for their four years of college work. We are hoping also to extend our offerings in the near future into the evening school and summer school and to provide courses on the graduate level, where they will be available to secondary school teachers. We are working with faculty in various departments to get new

courses dealing with women introduced, and to redesign existing courses so that they will include more material about women. We are visiting all departments in the college in order to describe Women's Studies to them and elicit their cooperation. Since Towson State College provides large numbers of graduates who become teachers in Maryland schools it is seriously hoped that work on the secondary school level in Women's Studies will complement what is being done on the college level. The poet Adrienne Rich has said that if we have arrived, in the 1970's, at the point where "women can stop being haunted, not only by 'convention and propriety' but by internalized fears of being and saying themselves, then it is an extraordinary moment for the woman writer—and reader." It is also an extraordinary moment for the teacher.

[1]Work has begun in this area: see Susan L. Wiik, "The Sexual Bias of Textbook Literature," *English Journal*, v. 62, no. 2, February, 1973, pp- 224-9. Ms. Wiik examined fifteen literature anthologies frequently used by seventh, eighth and ninth grade teachers and found very few major characters who were female and only a minimal number of these who could be considered non-stereotypical.

[2]Full information on how to acquire materials mentioned in This article is appended below.

Bibliography

Basic Resources

Female Studies II: syllabi and bibliographies of college Women's Studies courses, $4.25. (All prices listed in this section include postage.)

Female Studies III: more college syllabi and bibliographies plus discussion of selected courses, $4.75.

Female Studies IV, Teaching About Women: essays, $2.25.

Female Studies V: 17 essays on women, education, sexism and Women's Studies, $4.75.

All the above available from KNOW, Inc., Box 86031, Pittsburgh, Pa., 15221. All orders must be prepaid.

Female Studies VI, Closer to the Ground: Women's Classes, Criticism, Programs, $2.50 plus $.50 postage.

Guide to Female Studies No. 1: a list of over 600 courses, including course title, instructor, department, school and address, $1.00 plus $.25 postage.

Guide to Female Studies No. 2: a list of over 500 additional college, high-school, in-service, community and continuing edu-

cation courses, $1.00 plus $.25 postage.

Guide to Female Studies III: a list of over 600 college, high-school, in-service, community and continuing education courses, $1.00 plus $.25 postage.

Women's Studies Newsletter, individual sub. $5.00; institutional/library, $10.00. Subscription includes Guides Nos. 2 and 3 above.

Feminist Resources for Schools and Colleges: A Guide to Curriculum Materials, $1.00 plus $.25 postage.

High School Feminist Studies, $2.50 plus $.50 postage.

All the above available from The Feminist Press, Box 334, SUNY/College at Old Westbury, Old Westbury, New York, 11568.

Anthologies

Mary Anne Ferguson, ed., *Images of Women in Literature*, Boston, Houghton, Mifflin, 1973.

Michele Murray, ed., *A House of Good Proportions. Images of Women in Literature*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1973.

Individual Paperbacks

Publishers and costs of commercial paperbacks can be found in *Paperbound Books in Print*, R.R. Bowker Co., 1180 Avenue of The Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036

Feminist Press biography series, $1.50 each.

Feminist Press reprint series ("Life in the Iron Mills"), $1.95.

Magazines

"Women in the Colleges: Status, Teaching, Feminist Criticism, *"College English*, v. 32, no. 8, May, 1971. NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, Ill., 61801, $1.50.

Elaine Hedges, ed., "Women Teaching and Writing, *"College English*, v. 34, no. 1, October, 1972. NCTE, as above.

Susan L. Wiik, "The Sexual Bias of Textbook Literature," *English Journal*, v. 62, no. 2, February, 1973. NOTE, as above.

"Women. An Issue," *The Massachusetts Review*, v. XIII, nos. 1-2, Winter-Spring, 1972. *The Massachusetts Review*, Amherst, Mass., 01002, $2.00.

Feminist Studies, 417 Riverside Dr., New York, N.Y., 10025, individual sub. $6.00; institutional/library, $10.00.

Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, Inc., 440 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y. 10016, individual sub. $10.00; institutional/library, $29.00.

Pamphlets

Guidelines to Improving the Image of Women in Textbooks, Research and Information Division, Scott, Foresman and Co., 1900 E. Lake Ave., Glenview, Ill., 60025, no cost.

Non-Sexist Booklist: High School Titles, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: Baltimore Brance, 10 Jack Frost Lane, Ruxton, Md., 21204, $.10.

Women's Rights Policy Resolutions, American Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, 1012 14th St., N. W., Washington, D. C., 20005, Item No. 599, $.25.

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